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The Osgood Marionettes

**AIR-BORN CREATURES AND THEIR WORLD OF FANTASY
CREATED BY A MASTER DESIGNER AND NEEDLEWORKER.**

By Mary Moore

(Mary Moore is assistant editor of **CRAFT HORIZONS**. This article appeared in **CRAFT HORIZONS**, Autumn Issue, 1950. Permission to reprint has been courteously granted by **CRAFT HORIZONS**.)

During the war Mildred Osgood worked with shadow puppets which she developed for the entertainment of children during air raid drills and blackouts. In her endeavor to construct light-weight marionettes, she chose shadow puppets as her medium. These she found easy to transport, to manipulate during production and also less apt to cause accidents in case of actual air raids. During a performance which she was giving, a little girl who was helping her, accidentally showed one of the puppets before the screen instead of behind it. Miss Osgood, seeing the effect, was struck by the beauty of the very light creature and by its supple movement against the background. Greater freedom of movement and complexity of detail, both dear to her imagination, were immediately visualized, and she began to work on three-dimensional puppets light as shadows, yet intricate in detail, polished in character. She was eminently successful.

"If I hadn't tried to solve a problem in the best interests of children," Miss Osgood says, "it is very unlikely that I would have found this new marionette form. I really wasn't trying to invent a new form because of the artistic urge. It was the social urge that prompted action and led me to the point where I could create this form." She finds that the intense wish to share her creations with others, especially with children, brings her success and inspiration. "My enthusiasm reaches high pitch when there is a chance for an actual production involving many people," she says. "I am convinced that in my marionettes I have a precious gift for children. I have watched their faces glow as my marionettes brought them a world they so truly love and understand."

The Osgood marionettes have all the qualities of the shadow puppets, and in addition a three-dimensional life, and a correspondingly greater scope of character and movement, unrestricted by nearness to the screen. Moreover, they are triumphantly colorful with backgrounds and dress ranging from palest of transparent shades to the vivid primary values.

Mildred Osgood works exclusively with string puppets. Her construction is an outstanding element of her work and is a unique development in the field. . . The photographs indicate that this construction gives above all else flexibility and lightness and according to the artist "allows for subtle changes in movement and life-like reflexes." The materials used contribute their part to this phenomenon. The lightest of strings, silk or nylon, can be used to manipulate the dolls and because the fig-

ures are light, it is possible to use almost weightless controls of plastic. . . Operators of the Osgood marionettes virtually never become tired. Of course a great many new materials such as the plastics, and means of stiffening well-known light-weight fabrics are available nowadays. Miss Osgood uses many of these, often combining several in one puppet.

Miss Osgood constructs her marionettes in the general shape of cylinders, of thin, resilient material such as organdy, tarlatan or plastic. She rolls the cylinders at their ends to give reinforcement and connects them by means of peripheral threads. She has found that a great variety of stiff materials such as organdy, crinoline, rayon net, parchment paper, cellophane and cellulose acetate which hold their shape when rolled can be used for cylinders. All portions of the human marionettes can be made from these cylinders, except the hands and feet and possibly the faces, which are generally molded. The realistic human-like figures all have masks molded over a head which is first carved from paraffin. However, the cylinders can be rounded at the ends for making heads, by the use of darts or overlapping folds. For reinforcement purposes it is desirable to curl the material at the ends of the cylinders where they are to be joined. To produce joints, the cylinders are connected by many threads of a length sufficient to give good articulation. Trunks can be constructed of either one or two cylinders. The arms and legs are usually made of a pair of cylinders joined to each other and to the trunk portions by threads. The hands and feet are made of the same materials, such as organdy. Fingers are formed separately and sewed to the palm portion or else by sewing the material into folds, with the thumb sewn on separately. The ears and noses of the early marionettes were made of organdy, while the eyes, eyebrows and mouths were embroidered. Beads were used for eyes. Joe Crocus and The Flower Fairy . . . show very well just how the legs and feet are constructed. The Weather Man . . . giving instructions to the two dancing flower sisters, is a masterpiece of cylindrical construction. He is a special case, made entirely of multiple plastic cylinders and is capable of fantastic, shimmering movements in keeping with his magical nature. His ears, eyelids, eyebrows and mouth move and he has a special song of his own to express his great powers over the elements.

Balance is important in construction. Miss Osgood does not attempt to figure out in advance the composition of one of her creatures. She never makes a drawing. Often she finds that the puppet seems to grow out of her hands of its own accord and only her great experience in construction enables her to obtain the correct balance and juxtaposition of parts. Weights are sometimes used in the feet or a change of material may give the necessary balance. When the puppet is completed its movements are very lifelike or fanciful, according to the desired effect. Joe Crocus and The Flower Fairy are wonderful winged creatures. Moved through the air by their strings they actually attain a flight of their own and an individual movement independent of the operator. Each creature is individual and sure in its existence. Finished, it lives and demands recognition.

The kind of materials used offers a wide scope for the use of imagination. Miss Osgood excels in this. She is lavish and inventive with

materials. A touch of some exotic color or stuff may suffice to create just the illusion she seeks, and she is particularly good at evoking the fantastic and the unexpected from combinations of organdy, net, lace, velvet, crinoline, glass, plastic, feathers, embroidery, gold tinsel and beads. Her working equipment is simple; she use a rather long needle and nylon or silk thread in most cases. The picture of the contents of her working basket at a specific moment reveals some of the things with which she works.

She is most painstaking with detail and has spent as long as five hours on one small hand with its fingers. The way she combines materials is particularly well shown in the case of the two flowers. The blossoms are made of hollow glass balls covered with net and are extremely light, of course. The stems are made of many organdy cylinders attached at the ends by threads to give great flexibility. The leaves are attached to the stem by threads and are of rayon net. In making leaves or other flat parts of rayon net, it is preferable to use the material in double thickness, or a single thickness with edges turned back and hemmed. A glass bead is attached at the base of the stem for added weight.

Because so much of the charm of these marionettes depends upon the beauty of detail and expression, as well as upon movement, Miss Osgood has consciously planned them for motion pictures and television, rather than large auditoriums. However, she has given a number of successful performances to "live" audiences in New York City and elsewhere and has had enthusiastic response. According to Miss Osgood "the marionettes are extremely photogenic while in motion and the potential movements inherent in each one imply an economy of production in sharp contrast to the intricate, expensive filming required by stop photography."

She has made two color films so far, both using *The Weather Man*, with music by Lucille Paris and script by Leah Gale. She has also developed full-length plays, "A Modern Fairy Tale," by Virginia Sorenson and "Jonathan's Magic," by Harriet Eager Davis featuring "The Flower Fairy" and "Joe Crocus."

Note: Mildred Osgood formerly taught art at Indiana State Teachers College and at Hunter College in New York City. She has just been appointed to the staff of the art department of The State Teachers College at Montclair, N. J.



Turnabout's Fair Play

Forman Brown

Harry Burnett should be writing this — after all, it was he who got the invitation to do so. But Harry is a pragmatic person. "I'm a puppeteer - you're a writer", said he. "You write it." And so, for what it is worth, here it is.

We - the Yale Puppeteers, that is - have acquired a reputation, we understand, as an uncooperative bunch, so far as meetings, festivals and symposiums go. Our only excuse, if one is needed, is that we have been busy supporting ourselves for some thirty years now, and during that time we've had ample opportunity to get fed up with dilettantism of the smock-and -studio variety that raises a supercilious eyebrow at commercial success - at least - until they have achieved it. Puppeteering has been our bread and butter, and we have worked very hard to turn it into cake as well. If a puppet production can be both an artistic and a commercial success, that's ideal. If it must be one or the other, we're sufficiently crass, or disillusioned, to prefer it should be the latter. Our apprenticeship was long and tough, and when we finally hit upon an idea the public liked, we worked it for all it was worth, turning, frankly, an approving eye on audience appreciation and the box-office.

Turnabout Theatre will start its eleventh year in July. During the past ten years, in a theatre seating only 180, we have played to nearly a half million paying customers. We're rather proud of that, and completely determined to make it continuous so long as we can produce shows the people like. The success we have had, is not, of course, entirely due to puppets - for we combine with the puppet musicals an intimate revue with a small company of actors, and we still encounter, almost every day, people who are violently allergic to puppets in any form. Some of these we have converted. Many remain unconverted, but certainly the great majority of our audiences seem to have a fine time.

In our puppet shows we have combined our talents to produce as amusingly as we know how. They are as carefully planned, costumed and lighted, in their small way, as a Broadway production would be, and they are directed for pace and continuously sustained interest. "Keep 'em laughing" is a good formula in show business, whether it is "Kiss Me, Kate," or a Punch and Judy at the County Fair.

And that I guess, is that. So, in future, if any aggrieved puppeteers feel inclined to accuse us of being too utterly superior for any use, I hope they will believe that we really don't feel that way at all—we're just too darned busy!

MORE ABOUT TURNABOUT

It is almost impossible to identify Forman Brown without including Harry Burnett and Richard Brandon, so closely have the names been associated with the "Yale Puppeteers" and the "Turnabout Theatre."

However, Forman Brown, as Harry Burnett indicates in the above article, is the writer of the group. At one time English instructor at the University of Michigan, he now satisfies his life-long ambition to be a writer by writing, not only all the "Turnabout" plays, songs and sketches, but many for the radio and theater. He wrote the lyrics for several Los Angeles Civic Light Opera productions as well as the lyrics for "The Red Mill" and "Music in My Heart." He is the author of several volumes of prose and verse, . . . best known to puppeteers through "Punch's Progress," a "chronicle of adventure." Written in inimitable Forman Brown style, it traces the adventures of the "Yale Puppeteers" from college days until the time "I Am Suzanne," (one of the early triumphs of puppets with motion pictures) flashed across the marquee of Music Hall in Radio City.

Readers of "Punch's Progress" will understand Forman Brown's statement above,—“Our apprenticeship was long and tough.” Puppeteers should buy, beg or borrow until they have read this captivating account of the "Yale Puppeteers." No article ever written about them, (and there have been many) has dipped below the surface and given the full story of those early hectic years which they met with the same indomitable will to succeed and the same sense of humor that has permeated the "Turnabout Theatre" and made it the favorite haunt of Hollywood sophisticates. It is the story of a trio of college boys determined to make a success of a puppet enterprise where their versatile talents could be used to the best advantage, and where they could enjoy that personal satisfaction that comes from doing the thing they liked best. It is this spirit that accounts for the enviable reputation of the "Turnabout Theatre" today.

The now famous Turnabout Theatre was opened in Los Angeles by the Yale Puppeteers on July 10, 1941. Situated on a quaint side street, this unique theater, seating only 180 guests, plays six performances a week, fifty weeks in a year, and grosses \$140,000 a year. Every performance plays to a capacity adult audience. So many repeaters are found among the guests that an Old Timer's Key is presented to those who have made ten or more visits to the theatre; however, many have an attendance record of fifty or more visits.

Deriving its name from the two stages located in opposite ends of the theatre and the ancient street car seats which are reversed during the intermission, the Turnabout offers both a puppet musical and an intimate revue with live actors. Coffee, served informally in the courtyard during the intermission permits the visitors to wander back of the puppet stage where hundreds of puppets dangle from their strings, awaiting their curtain calls. Visitors may choose to examine the autographs of famous people which cover the walls of the theatre. If the visitor is distinguished enough, he will be handed a brush and invited to add his signature to the collection. A never failing source of amusement are the seats, so aptly named,—Shiver 'n Shake, Straight 'n Narrow, or Hale 'n Hearty, as the case may be.

Harry Burnett is the designer and creator of all the puppets. In addition to this and his job of directing all the puppet musicals, he doubles as a comedian in the Turnabout revues and acts as host to

Turnabout audiences in the Puppetry Workshop after each performance.

Richard Brandon is the business manager. However, it must not be suspected for a moment that any member of the group confines his activities to his own particular field. Each operates puppets and pitches in on all the chores which are necessary to operate the theatre as well as their apartments over the theatre. It is said that selling tickets at the box office is their favorite job,—here they can “tell off” customers who politely inquire if they may buy tickets for the revue and skip the puppet show.



The Fabulous Punch

The American Craftsman Council, 32 E. 52nd St., New York City, is sponsoring what promises to be a most unusual and outstanding exhibit during the month of April. It is an exhibition planned to portray the life story of the best known puppet in the world, Mr. Punch. The exhibit opens in their gallery, at the above address, on April 4th and closes on April 27th. The gallery is open from 10:30 to 5:30, Monday through Saturday.

The purpose of the exhibit is to portray Punch in his full historical significance. There will be sections on: Punch in the Misty Past; From Evil Eye to Demon; Punch as a World Traveler; Punch in the New World; and Punch and a New Medium. . .Television.

Many historically important puppets, some from P. of A. members, have been loaned for this exhibition. Altho sponsored by the American Craftsmen's Educational Council, Louis Bunin is acting as director of the exhibit, while Miss Helen Watkins and Ben Radin are arranging the staging and script.

Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb, Vice President of the Council, thru whose kindness the “Journal” has received notices of the exhibit, promises pictures of the exhibit later. It is hoped that P. of A. members in that vicinity will make an effort to visit the exhibit.

“Punch? Every one knows Punch! An absurd mal-formed little monster designed to frighten children into laughter. Or is he?

“An impossible wooden devil with an impossible mind and an impossible back, - he put on the fool's cap of a King's jester and terrified not the children, not the grown-ups but the King.

“There have been many demons, but only one Punch. He has had many names, - Kasperle, Petrushka, Pulichinello, Punch, — but only one body and one soul, the soul of the little wooden devil who dared say No!”

Aileen O. Webb

Puppetry in the Junior League

Jean Starr Wiksell

(Since 1937 Jean Starr Wiksell has been puppetry consultant for the Association of Junior Leagues of America. (In this capacity she has held institutes, started Leagues in puppetry, and acted as general advisor for League puppetry programs.)

Since 1925 League puppetry programs have been growing in communities here and there over the country. The first to use puppets was Portland, Oregon, who made their own marionettes, stage and sets, and wrote their own plays. They were followed closely by Montgomery, Alabama, in 1927, Chatanooga in 1928, and Roanoke in 1929. Today, twenty-five years later, forty-five Leagues out of a total of 172 are active with puppet programs of one type or another. Audiences which once totaled in the hundreds have now passed the 225,000 mark with no estimate of the numbers reached by therapy and recreational programs.

From the beginning the most frequently used approach has been through the public schools, since the schools formed the largest audience to be reached, and it was commonly felt that the program could be best justified by making the plays available to large numbers of children. Trouping quickly expanded to reach hospitals, orphanages and settlements. Still closely allied to the schools, but with its objective education rather than entertainment was Buffalo, who began a series of historical plays with marionettes for its Centennial Celebration in 1932. Later the first Work Relief Historical Marionette project was officially approved and opened under the Emergency Relief Bureau of Buffalo with puppets loaned by the Junior League. The schools used the plays widely in extensive tests in the field of visual education.

Other groups found other means more suitable to their communities. Among the first of these was Indianapolis. Marionette work was begun at the request of the museum director as a means of vitalizing museum programs. At about the same time Montgomery, Ala., interested its city in cooperating in the building of a permanent puppet theater, The Junior League Playhouse, on the city playground.

The increased popularity of puppets during the thirties closely paralleled a growing interest all over the country, and was due in part to more frequent puppet exhibits and demonstrations given at the Children's Theater Conference. To meet this new interest, in 1937, a puppetry consultant was added to the staff to aid individual Leagues to find the channel through which they could best serve their community as well as to provide technical assistance. This field service has been continued by the League ever since. By 1938 enough Leagues had become active that the Association held, in Dayton, Ohio, the first National Puppetry Conference in the United States.

The following years continued with increased interest until the advent of the war. Then, although the need was greater, the war years showed a marked decrease in puppet activity. Shifting personnel, loss of household employees, and transportation difficulties brought League

groups using puppet programs to five in 1943. But by 1947 eighteen were again active with puppets. That year the first Junior League groups were invited to present shows at the National Puppetry Festival of the Puppeteers of America, and participation in the organization expanded greatly until in 1948 the Oklahoma City League puppetry group sponsored the Festival, organizing and carrying out plans for a most successful Festival.

This same year the Washington D. C. League began using puppets as part of a TV program at the request of NBC. Trouping shows to schools continued to reach wide audiences but many Leagues began new projects. Indianapolis launched a Community Puppet Theater Workshop, an all community project. Through the cooperation of the city, the Rau Memorial Library garage was secured, remodeled and decorated by the League and fully equipped to provide for every phase of marionette activity. Anyone interested in puppets was welcome. Programs once planned predominantly for children now broadened to include adults.

Comparatively few League programs in the past had dealt with teaching, but now many found themselves needed to teach puppetry in community centers. Members found an increasing demand for recreational therapy in hospitals and schools for exceptional children . . . teaching them to make hand puppets and to present simple shows. Some, like Oklahoma City, as part of the Community Arts Program, worked with group leaders, teaching them to use puppets as part of their program. Other groups, such as New Orleans, work directly with the City Recreation Board or Park Commission in presenting shows to centers or with the Library Commission in presenting shows to draw children to these centers.

By 1950 forty-five Leagues were active with puppets, more than double the number of two years before, with increasing emphasis on the expansion of recreational therapy and the inclusion of adult groups such as the mental patient's therapy work done by the Butte League. To date none have attempted mental or physical therapy. Occasionally, other productions began to be planned to implement other programs within the community, as in Great Falls, Montana, where the League helped promote the Community Chest drive with a show based on the Red Feather theme. Oklahoma City League built a hand puppet show to push the bond issue for a new library and other civic improvements. The large potential fields for puppets in isolated rural districts have been tapped only by three Leagues: Butte and Great Falls, Montana, and Huntington. The demands within their own cities have been so great that most groups can not meet these needs.

At present approximately seventeen additional Leagues are contemplating puppetry programs and may soon swell the numbers working in their communities with puppetry projects.

League puppet projects cover a wide range of activities. This tabulation gives some idea of the scope. Working in children's hospitals are 15 groups; in churches 2; puppet classes 2; for Community Chest 6; community workshops 5; community theaters 3; department stores 2; home for infirm 1; in-league promotion 5; libraries 5; museums 5; propaganda shows 8; recreation 8; orphanages 3; settlement houses 4; schools 26; therapy 3; YWCA 1, and school for deaf 1.

The Tape Recorded Puppet Show

Rufus Rose

We have recently produced **The Ant and the Grasshopper**, a musical fantasy, using tape recording for all voices, music and sound effects. Although we are not completely satisfied with this first attempt, we have learned much and believe the tape recorded method provides important advantages for achieving superior performances. We value the method sufficiently to recommend its further use by ourselves and others, and are happy to pass our experience and suggestions on to you.

As with any new technique there is a tendency to misuse it until, through trial and error, we bring it into proper relation to all the other techniques employed in puppet show production and presentation. From the beginning the tape recording method should be fully exploited for its real worth to the best possible show, which means:

- (1) The show must be written and recorded with extreme care for **TIMING**. You must rehearse the entire show including puppeteering and all other business before the final script is set and recorded in order to determine a pace that is dramatic and practical for the puppeteers.
- (2) The quality of the voices, music and sound effects must be excellent, therefore all conditions for making the recording must be right. This suggests a sound studio with trained personnel. Use as many artists for voices as necessary to obtain best characterizations. Remember, they don't travel with the show, and two puppeteers can manipulate beautifully what may have required a dozen competent actors to record. Have at least two tapes of each show for accidental loss insurance.
- (3) Rehearsal and rehearsal with the recording is of utmost importance. Above all, avoid the attitude that since the show is recorded the puppeteer's job is simpler. Actually more concentration and skill are called for than with an unrecorded show. The puppeteer must anticipate and act his puppet every instant. Herein lies the greater potential of the recorded show: The puppeteer, with the best possible voices, music and sound effects dramatically supplied him without effort on his part, can devote his full energies and artistry to superior manipulation. Tape recording seems superior to other recording methods because:
 1. The tone quality of tape is recognized as best.
 2. Tape recording can be readily edited.
 3. Tape plays up to one hour of continuous recording.
 4. Tape is less subject to damage through playing and handling. No surface noise.
 5. It is less expensive to operate since the tape does not deteriorate through use and can be reused for new recordings.
 6. Tape recording equipment is portable and practical to set up and operate. Initial cost varies from \$150.00 up. For \$250.00 a good quality machine with microphone and six hours of tape can be

bought. Additional volume through separate speakers and amplifier at about \$100.00 is recommended.

Our experience indicates that properly handled, the tape recorded show can be superior, improperly handled it is definitely inferior to the live voice show. To those critics who say that the well-recorded show lacks warmth and spontaneity, I will concede very little. After all, most radio programs today, dramatic and otherwise, are taped shows. All movies are recorded. It is primarily a matter of approaching the technique positively and objectively. In conclusion I believe that the tape recorded puppet show will find its proper place and that audiences and producers will share in the benefits which this new technique will afford.

More Tape Recording

Meredith Bixby

Our program this year "CALIPH STORK" is from the story by Haupff and it is completely tape recorded. This is our first venture in tape recording and it was quite a struggle! But the sound is completely natural—the volume and coverage of auditorium space is ample and easy on the ears. Our audiences are not aware that the program is recorded. Part of this is because most of the voices recorded are those of the operator of the puppets. We have avoided, for this show at least, the opportunity tape affords of introducing a wide variety of voices, mob scenes, etc. Of course, we make no secret of our methods to any of our interested spectators.

Like most of us, I have long been disdainful of any sound amplification. However, there are certainly places that demand more volume. We have been carrying a Public Address system for such places. We brought the gain up, kept the speakers close to the proscenium opening and did not use a decibel more than we needed. If we did, the sound was "canned." We use about the same procedure with our tape. However, the sound is very much better than our Public Address live sound. I think this is because with the live show, the microphones were too far away—necessitating high gain and there was considerable difficulty maintaining a constant distance from the microphone. Of course, there was no monitor riding a gain control as in a radio station.

With tape, the recording is done at the most advantageous distance from the microphone and there is a monitor during the recording. The worries we had about synchronization of puppet and sound just don't exist.

I think it is very difficult to successfully record a new show. With a live show, you change it constantly while it is new, changing the timing and improving things as you notice the response of the audience. I found it maddening not to be able to instantly change the timing and go along with my audience. After the show had been out six weeks, I cancelled a whole week and re-recorded it all. Then, during the week between Christmas and New Year's, we again recorded. The first tape

(Continued on Page 22)



PUPPET PARADE

(see photo section)

THE OSGOOD MARIONETTES

Upper . . . The Flower Fairy and Sir Greenup. Sir Greenup is a fantastic woodland being. The Flower Fairy illustrates the cylindrical construction which enables it to attain a motion of its own.

Center . . . The Weather Man and one of his dancing flowers.

Lower . . . Jonathan, a "real" little boy who plays a leading role in the productions, and his mount, Chico, meet a squirrel which is made of chenille and wire with a feather tail.

CINDERELLA AND PRINCE CHARMING

Two charming puppets from Fay Coleman's latest show, "Cinderella," which will open in Chicago in April. Fay and Roy Etherington played the Chicago area this season with "Tom Sawyer" and "The Lilliput Revue" until Roy was called to the Navy. "By a series of coincidental circumstances," writes Fay, he and Barbara are now on a seven week tour doing George Cole's "The King of the Golden River."

BUBBLES DIVINE

This fingerine, so named by Herb Scheffel, her creator, is the first finger puppet to make the picture pages of the Journal. Herb promises to send some sketches and a bit about the construction of a fingerine later on, while Lea Wallace describes its entertainment possibilities in "Fun with a Fingerine," elsewhere in this issue.

In addition to being a puppeteer, Herb is a commercial artist and a successful painter in the fine arts field. A one man show of his water colors was opened to the public at the Roko Gallery in New York City, April the second. It will continue through the 26th of the month. Members of the P of A are cordially invited to drop in.

TURNABOUT THEATRE

Left . . . Harry Burnett dresses like a puppet character from "Tom and Jerry" for his curtain call. The puppet is Prof. Mantini who presents his royal manikins in a bar room scene from "Tom and Jerry."

Center . . . Front row, Vestal Virgin chorus from "Caesar Julius"; next gladiators from same performance; third row, Voodoo girls chorus from "My Man Friday"; last row, Minstrel chorus from "Uncle Tom's Hebb'n."

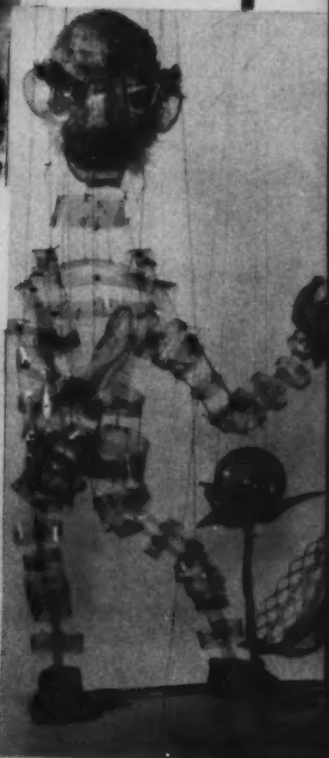
"Right . . . Aphasia, Caesar's wife, from "Caesar Julius." Gladiators from same play.





the
**Mildred
Osgood**

Marionettes





Prince Charming and Cinderella



COLEMAN
PUPPETS

**Bubbles Divine.....
a fingerine**

**B
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HARRY BURNETT
and
PROF. MANTINI



BACKSAG

Turnao
Theatr





APHASIA from
"CAESAR JULIUS"

KSAGE

about
theatre



Between Two Thieves



ROSE AND WILLIAM JACOBY



Portland junior league





Detroit Puppet Guild



BETWEEN TWO THIEVES

"What once began as an incidental hobby now has us pretty well involved. In fact, it looks like the hobby has us!" write Rev. and Mrs. Wm. R. Jacoby of Booneville, Indiana. Rev. Jacoby is the pastor of Hemenway Memorial Presbyterian Church in that city.

The Jacobys began puppetry along in the early 1930's. After seeing how well stories could be portrayed with puppets, they decided to use them to portray Bible stories, as a project in religious education. As time went on, they developed the Life of Christ, from the Nativity to the Ascension, using 34 characters. This was finally broken down into three plays: The Nativity, Christ's Ministry, and the Passion Play. These are presented to church audiences, Young Peoples' Conferences, clubs, etc. The stories preach no doctrinal issues—just interpret the Biblical record.

"Of all the mediums of visual education, none surpass marionettes,—regardless of the subject taught," comments Rev. Jacoby.

And, on the lighter side, they present an elaborate variety act, with two original plays, "My Old Kentucky Home" and "Chigarum," a story of an abused little boy wherein a big bull-frog becomes the hero. In addition, they present at Christmas time, "A Christmas Eve Party," which brings all the toys under the tree to life for a performance before Santa Claus, while several eavesdropping children get a real eye-full.

PORTLAND JUNIOR LEAGUE

Above . . . Scene from "Nestor, the Talking Horse."

Below . . . Standing is Ellie Heintz who played the part of the Fairy in "Nestor." Seated, Sue Draper and Paula Frank who played the parts of Jimmie and Pinkie.

The League trooped this show 51 times to county schools, two hospitals and the community recreation center, reaching approximately 7000 children from Nov. 1949 to May 1950.

This year they are trooping "Millie Presents" with great success, due largely, they say, to "the splendid assistance and direction of Jean Wiksell."

Portland Junior League, according to Jean Starr Wiksell, was the first Junior League to introduce Puppetry into its program. The present chairman of the Puppetry Theater is Mrs. David DeWeese. Right now they are in need of a new script. Does any one have one to offer? Send it in care of the Journal.

DETROIT PUPPET GUILD

Mrs. Alice Kales Hartwick was hostess to the Detroit Puppet Guild when Rufus and Margo Rose played in that city. Fern Zwicky reports that the reception was most delightful. In case any one does not know, the Detroit Puppet Guild has the largest membership of any guild affiliated with the P of A. They maintain a heavy production program, get out their own news-letter and find time for several social events during the year.

(Continued from Page 11)

must have had 100 splices in it! At times, I was thoroughly disgusted with the whole recording idea . . . However, now that the timing finally suits me, I like it and feel it has many possibilities.

We found it necessary to rehearse as usual and make a rough recording—with curtain track noise—marionette feet and many extraneous sounds. Later, this was played on one tape machine which I monitored with earphones while recording on a second machine, and at the same time I directed the actors who were seated around a microphone! It's a good trick to hear your own voice on earphones, talk into the mike and wave the others in at the right time! Sort of like the old gimmick of scratching your head and patting your stomach. This gave us the actual timing needed to execute the business on stage.

I use an Ekotape No. 102 recorder which lists at \$407. The No. 101 at about \$350 is just as good for this purpose but I was not able to get delivery at the time I ordered. This machine is made by Webster Electric at Racine, Wisconsin. I choose it because of the rugged mechanical system and the simplicity of the control mechanism. It is rated one of the best recorders in fidelity at its tape speed which is $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches per second. It reproduces from 50 to 8000 cycles which is enough to make the music sound good to all but a very few connoisseurs of high fidelity.

At $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches per second, I get my 58 minute show on two 30 minute reels; 7 inches in diameter—the maximum size on this machine. I use Audio plastic tape. For a musical show $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches per second is better speed but this necessitates more or larger reels and twice as much tape.

I use one auxiliary 12 inch G.E. 20 watt speaker built in a 5 foot long closed box which is part of my stage and dead center. This forms a sort of accoustical cabinet. For very large auditoriums I have a second 10 inch speaker which I hang on a baffle from my top front curtain—some 10 feet from the floor. Both are out of sight. The recorder provides an honest 5 watts of audio with maybe 3 or 4 more if you need it. We have found this system to be ample for places seating up to 1500 and have never used our auxiliary 20 watt amplifier which now sits home in the studio and is destined to serve as a modulator for our projected "Ham" rig.

We find the advantages of a recorded show to be the constant quality of the voices—each show as good as the last one—through colds and like hazards, the fact that it is easier to replace an operator quickly, should it be necessary. In this year of war and the draft this is a major factor to me. And we may now use women's voices where needed, even though our troupe is all male.

I don't like the lack of flexibility—the fact that you can't play up to an exceptional or different audience. However, we specialize in playing to large audiences of elementary aged school children and in this narrowed audience type, the flexibility angle hasn't bothered us much since kids the same age react about the same all over.



International Puppet News

Marjorie Batchelder McPharlin

(This story was derived from articles sent by Richard Winzer of Lubeck-Schlutup, near Hamburg.)

Despite the destruction of war and the loss of equipment, many of the German puppeteers continued their work, or returned to it after hostilities ceased. Young men became puppeteers, some of them ex-soldiers who learned puppet-playing in POW camps in England or France. There are now between five and seven hundred professional puppet showmen, about a thousand amateurs, and three or four thousand more who have previously played. There is a brisk market for ready made puppets and puppet parts, so about a hundred and fifty persons are engaged in puppet construction. Another two hundred people are doing research, collecting puppets, writing articles, and lecturing. The large majority of showmen use hand-puppets, with marionettes next in popularity. There is a growing interest in shadow plays, while a few puppeteers use flat figures or rod-puppets.

Judging from the number of exhibits and conventions held within the past two years, showmen are not only concerned about their own work, but interested in the course of puppetry as a whole. They are all plagued with the problem of earning a living, and are trying affiliation with such groups as the Union of the Members and Owners of Theatres or the Union of Fair Showmen as one means of protecting their interests. Professional showmen see to it that their art is represented in such assemblies as that of the Cultural Committee of all German Town Magistrates held at Hocheim. Here Prof. Harro Siegel of Braunschweig lectured on "Puppetry and its Significance in the Cultural Life." He urged that a licensing office be set up to issue permits to professional puppeteers in order to insure a high standard of performances in public and school shows. He asked for municipal support for and establishment of permanent puppet theatres on the same basis as large theatres and music halls, which has been done to some extent in a few German cities such as Munich, Cologne, Aachen, and Coblenz. He stressed the economic problems of puppet showmen, and suggested ways of solving them; on the whole, his speech was favorably received by the good burgomasters.

The first general gathering of puppeteers since the war was the meeting at Techlenburg in 1948 which was sponsored by the Verband Deutscher Puppenspieler, an organization formed at Darmstadt by a group of old puppeteers. This assembly was important because it was attended by many showmen, old and new, who threshed out their common problems—how to strengthen puppetry, increase its influence on the cultural life, discover the best methods for the educational and

therapeutic uses of puppets, and "to find the congenial attention of the competent authorities." The following year a similar meeting was held at Ahlsfeld.

Meanwhile, regional groups were organized and are still coming to life, in all four German zones. Some of these publish more or less regular newsletters, leaflets, or periodicals. The most complete is "Der Puppenspieler," revived from pre-war days and edited by Fritz Wortelmann of Bochum. Richard Winzer sends out a newsletter, "Ri-Wi-Puppen-Post;" Margaret Cordes has a neat leaflet on news of the shadow theatre, and Walter Kipsch publishes a circulating letter, "Rundbriefe," in which are described the experiments made by members of the Pedagogic Working Club of Leer.

A strong impetus for the organization of local groups was given by the "Landestagung fuer Puppenspiel," a week's program sponsored by the Social Ministry of Land Nordrhein-Westfalen, at Ratingen near Dusseldorf. There were talks on pertinent puppet subjects such as Prof. Carl Niessen's "The Social Significance of Puppetry in the Past and Present," Friedrich Arndt's "Possibilities for the Use of Puppetry in Public Life, Film, and Radio," and a symposium, "The Audience of Puppetry: the Child, the Youth, the Adult," conducted by Dr. Alfred Lehmann and others. There was also a program of well selected shows presented by Max Jacobs, Friedrich Arndt and Martha Stocker (hand-puppets); Harro Siegel and Leonhart Ivo (marionettes); Annemarie Kaufmann and Dr. Max Buehrmann (shadows), and a local play by an elementary school of Cologne (for-puppets).

At Bochum, there is "Die Puppenspieler Gilde" led by Fritz Wortelmann. Qualified showmen are available for performances, and well-known students of the history of philosophy of puppetry give talks about "The World Mission of Puppetry," "The Spiritual Background of Puppetry," "Characters of the Puppet Theatre," "Family Puppetry," "Shadow Theatres," "Puppetry in Educational Work," History of German Puppetry," and allied subjects.

The Pedagogic Working Club of Leer, under the leadership of Walter Kipsch is a group of teachers concerned with puppets in education. In another part of Germany, the importance of puppets for children was pointed up during International Pedagogic Week at Mayence, during which an exhibition of children's puppet theatres was held. Sponsored by the Southwestern German Puppet-Playing and Research Institute, this rare collection of 18th and 19th century toy theatres showed examples from many countries. Since this was Goethe's anniversary year, the Faust puppet play was emphasized, and a model of Goethe's puppet stage from the Museum in Weimar was exhibited.

Courses in puppetry are given by groups in different parts of Germany, and are considered of great importance in the growth of puppet art. At the Youth Center in Barsbuettel near Hamburg, Max Jacob held a series of instruction sessions. Paul Thiele, in November 1948, organized at the Youth Home in Trillup a training course for professional puppeteers who, upon completion of the work were given Certificates of Qualification which enabled them to get licenses to perform.

To be continued

Fun with a Fingerine

Lea Wallace

(Lea Wallace, charming night club puppeteer, first woman to design the balloons for the famous Macy parade, author of "Choreography for Puppets" published in a recent issue of the "Journal," sends us this interesting account of Herb Scheffel's latest success, "Bubbles Divine." Herb Scheffel is a puppeteer, illustrator and artist, and a former president of the P of A.)

It was at the end of the summer that I received a letter from Herb Scheffel. I was reading aloud, fascinated with the account of his trip until I read, "... and Bubbles Divine accompanied me on my coast to coast tour. She was a sensation wherever we went." He went on to sing her praises until I could hardly wait to meet Miss Divine. But I did, finally. She was a blonde, talented finger puppet.

Bubble's successful tour extended from Boston to San Francisco, making dozens of stops between. We met her at a New York party in September, an audience of blase, professional people. It was "Bubbles" New York debut.

Lights were dimmed and Geraldine Agress (P of A member, too) played a fanfare and a baby spot picked out the tiny performer on her vast stage, the top of an upright piano. Miss Divine strutted her stuff in the best musical comedy manner. Even the puppets in the room were enthralled, and out of professional courtesy to another timber thespian holding the stage, behaved in a most respectful manner.

Bubbles danced everything from the Charleston to a tango—from the loftiest techniques of the ballet to the can-can. She was a chorine and she could glide and twirl like an ice skater. She was so tiny, (only six inches tall) so agile, so effortless in her movements... her whirling, leaping, strutting and high kicks bro't forth enthusiastic plaudit and bravos. She took her bow with outstretched perky arms and chubby legs (Herb's fingers).

Bubbles "begged off" for a change of costume, adjourned to her dressing room in the medicine cabinet, while her fans applauded for an encore.

More fanfare, and Bubbles entered for her encore. The music began mysteriously, a French Morrocan tempo. Out writhed Miss Divine swathed in sheer white gauze from head to toe. She began to gyrate slowly, and slowly the gauze began to peel off. One arm, one leg, then the other, finally the torso. Presto! Twenty cents worth of Johnson and Johnson bandage had dropped to her feet. Stepping daintily over the costume, she posed, resplendent in... one shimmering tassel. Amid enthusiastic applause, Bubbles had arrived! She was a success.

But the most surprising thing of the whole performance was the fact that one six-inch-high creature had entertained and held an audience' attention for fully twenty minutes. Which only proves that a ton of equipment isn't necessary if you have that certain creative, artistic, imaginative showmanship... and where music plays a part, an harmonious, sensitive accompanist.

Materials for Casting

Plastic Wood

Part II

Although plastic wood can be bought in any hardware store in various sized cans, it can be directly secured in quantity lots from the A. S. Boyle Company, 257 Cornelison Avenue, Jersey City, New Jersey. Most puppeteers have had some experience with this medium and many of the professionals use it exclusively. As long as the material is not too dry, it can be used without a solvent, but as it dries out, the use of plastic wood solvent will be necessary. The solvent is also valuable when cracks are being filled in. The following process should be followed when making a head from this material:

1. Soak the plaster molds in cold water for at least thirty minutes.
2. Grease the inside surfaces with vaseline or motor cup grease.
3. Apply a thin layer of plastic wood to each part of the mold pressing it well with fingers which should be kept wet. (Special care should be taken that the material is pressed firmly into the features of the mold.)
4. Carefully assemble the parts of the mold. Secure in place with string or rubber bands.
5. Insert the fingers inside the head as far as possible to work the seams together. Use a rounded wooden tool if the fingers will not reach.
6. Immerse the mold containing the plastic wood head. Let soak in water for a half hour. Carefully remove the mold under water. (Some people have success in letting the cast stand in water over night.) After the mold has been removed, leave the head, which is still soft, in the water until hard enough to handle.
7. Trim and patch the head where necessary. Correct any faults; let dry and sand.

Plastic wood heads can be sanded to very smooth surfaces. They can then be painted with practically any type of paint depending on the surface and effect desired.

Expirations

Several times a week we are asked to supply back issues of the "Journal" by members who have failed to renew their membership on time and who have missed one or more copies of the "Journal."

Notices are mailed out from the Executive Office in advance of expirations, giving ample time for renewal. In addition to this, the Journal Office sends one additional "good will" copy before putting the card in the dead file.

The "Journal" operates on a limited budget. We have to estimate accurately, the number of copies needed. To over estimate is a waste of money. Please help us by sending your renewals **ON TIME**.

Notes from the Executive Office

If any member failed to receive a publicity kit, please notify us at once.

Let us know if you need more Festival announcement labels.

Have you ordered your attractive blue and silver membership labels which were designed by Gayle and Doug Anderson? They're only a dollar for two hundred—three dollars and a half for a thousand!

Please send to the Executive Office copies of any of your publicity containing mention of the P. of A. for our files, for source material and for use at the Festival.

Let us know if you have any good color slides of which we might have copies made for our slide library, or which would be available for use at the Festival.

Let us know what you would like to display at the Festival Exhibit—details on the number and types of figures—any other information on what you can contribute to a large and finer-than-ever exhibit.

Whether you are a professional or non-professional, please notify the Executive Office if you plan to attend the Festival and have a production or numbers available for possible use on the program.

New Membership

How many new memberships have you sent in this year?

Alfred Wallace and the Proctors are now tied in first place for getting the largest number of members. The Stevens are second and the Duncans and Vivian Michael are tied for third place.

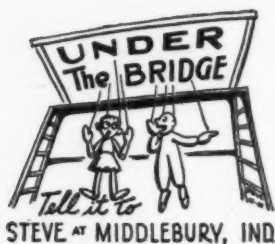
Our goal is 1000 members by Festival time. We will make it if YOU send in your new member! Let's go!

Regional Activities

Jero Magon of New York City has just completed an unusual exhibit for the School-Museum Program of the Board of Education of that city. It consists of eight cases of puppets of all types, finger, hand, rod, string, shadow, hand and rod, together with 25 large drawings showing construction and manipulation.

The idea originated with Charles Beck, co-ordinator of the school museum program. The exhibit will tour the High Schools of the city, remaining about five weeks in each one. It is expected to prove helpful to students of art, English, social studies and home economics classes.

The exhibit features puppets made in the advanced classes in puppetry under Mr. Magon's supervision,—puppets and films from his own collection and historic and professionally made puppets. A review of the project, stressing its educational value, was given in the Feb. 20th edition of the New York World-Telegraph and Sun.



Johnny Faust: "We are still exclusive with Philco, and all the mice are busy. Peep Squeak & Co. wish to announce their coming debut with **Philco TV Playhouse Annex.**" . . . **Nellie Mendham** is still teaching puppetry in adult ed. classes, also doing shadow children's parties, with Kirkwoodians **Gladys Dickey & Florence Deeling**, and readying a TV shadow for the Spring YWCA World Membership Drive . . . It's the tenth year for **Turnabout** . . . Member **James Neil Rasmussen** has joined a new company, and can be reached in care of it: Company 51-133, U. S. Naval Training Center, San Diego 55, Calif. . . . 23 year old **Gertrud Stemberger, Jr.** League protege, is an Austrian import, who is studying Creative Drama at Univ. of Wash., is studying puppets there, too, courtesy of **The Seattle Puppet Club!** (How about that?) Gertrud, whose command of English is excellent, headed a group of professional actors, as well as a group of puppeteers, in Vienna. Her instructor, **Aurora Valentinetti**, did a Christmas window show (Frederick & Nelson's), trouped "Shoemaker & the Elves," and did a lead in **Junior Programs'** operetta, "Hansel and Gretel." Where these people get their energy — !

The **Williams Marionettes** (Puyallup, Wash.), 21 years in puppets, tour the Pacific Coast with their latest "Paul Bunyan" show . . . The **Dr. Winthrop Phelps Unit** earning money for Seattle Spastic School with second year of Pinoke, and readying Oz. I always wanted to do Oz . . . **Mrs. Marjory Bracher & Mrs. Josie Robbins** having their new little book "Bible Marionettes" published by United Lutheran Publication House . . . **Mrs. Martin Falsberg & Mrs. Dennis Mattau** planning big puppet exhibits for annual Hobby Show. When you get that newspaper space, Mesdames, will you mention P of A please? . . . "Get 'em young" seems to be the attitude of **Mrs. Walter Weber** who taught pre-school puppetry for the Family Life Group recently.

Did you see **Bernard P. Frien's** article in Jan. "Family Circle," (Safeway Stores' nickel mag) "All About Puppets For Children"? . . . **C. Ray Smith** did "Revue in Miniature" at the Palace, N. Y. City, week of Jan. 11th . . . **Cy Kelly** debuted "Mr Bear" on TV in Ft. Worth at Christmas . . . **Yvonne Somers**, Mogadore, O., plugged P of A in a picture-writeup in the Cleveland Plain Dealer. And thank you, Yvonne . . . Attention, Denver: look for **Basil Milovosoroff** to do some shows at the Art Museum in early April. (Gee—what's this column coming to—that ain't "under the bridge"—that's news! News nothing—that's prophecy! Hawt dawg!) . . . **Mary Iseminger** of Hudson, Iowa, did her first stint of both words and action in a puppenspiel solo of "Lost Angel"

(correction: marionettenspiel) for Sunday School and Missionary Society, and was so encouraged she wound up a Feb. 27 Study Club lecture—"Puppet Guides to Health and Happiness" with a fist puppenspiel of "Somebody-Nothing" in a "walking theatre." Grundy Center will get her on Mar. 19th for another lecture demonstration. (There—I did it again! More prophecy!)

Spence ("Everybody's Sweetheart") **Gilmore** says P of A can be proud of its newest (Denver) Jr. Members, **Albert & Mario Zarlengo**. Cousins, they are 11 & 12 years old, and are now putting on an exceedingly clever hand-puppet show. 'Tis said they have a flair for comedy, and the gift of timing. The **Gilmores** made Pandora's Box for the Myth and Magic show at the Children's Museum in Feb. They're planning to attend the next Fest. They'd better! So had you! . . . **Walton & O'Rourke** are back in this country after nearly a year in England! Welcome home . . . **Natalie Hackenschmidt** is planning an "avant-garde" production which she hopes to do at the Fest, and meantime won't let anyone see . . . **Parsons Puppets**, Shelby, Mich., have a new one of "The Three Pigs," done with strings on a new-type fit-up which requires no platform, or stage, or drapes, or nothin! This I gotta see! What a lot of anguish it would have saved me if I'd figured that out 17 years ago! How you do it, Lew?

Recruit **Jerome Lovitts** at Fort Benning, Ga., does shows for the camp and hospital there . . . **Shirley O'Donnol**, teaching with **Caroline Lutz** at Univ. of Richmond (Va.) reports her class doing "LRRH"—handpuppets, for Miller & Rhoads Dept. Store—WTVR—Oct. 23, on their "Story Book Lady" series, and another in March. "Pocahontas" (string) WTVR—Dec. 9, for Univ. publicity dept. Virginia history series, with several following in Feb. . . . Campus show, Dec. 17, rod-figure "Nativity" at Christmas party, using figures made by **Dick Seammon**, (who is now at Indiana U. drama dept. . . . **Hildred & Wilma Karre**, York, Neb., did a Christmas rush of string shows, all over the state . . . **Don Sahlin** goes to the Army Mar. 5 . . .

William Tennent's new 10 minute Gay Nineties Revue has a singing waiter, can-can dancer, scene from **Ten Nights in a Barroom**, ballad singer, stripper, and a beef trust. (Shades of Billy Watson! how much can you get in ten minutes?!) It was produced in association with **Lea & Ga Wallace**, with **Herb Scheffel** in on ideas, design, and direction. **Dick Copeland** runs a doll hospital in North Sacramento, complete with ambulance (fittingly, a Crosley!) and does occasional amateur performances with their A B C Marionettes . . .

Jupiter Marionettes, **Frances Ward & Gladys Shockey**, Wichita, do skits on fire safety, traffic safety, home accidents, a new Christmas show "The Little Black Sheep," using black light (that is NOT a pun,) and a meller, "The Red Lantern," and they make and animate huge parade figures. Show-voices on wire include **Ken Jones**, **Carlyle Williams**, **La Vern Harwick**, and **John Ingram**. Gladys' tall son, **Skipper**, goes into the Service soon . . . **The Executive Office** of the P of A at Western College has visitors: recently the **Palmer Martins** stopped by, so did **Al Wallace** and **Dottie Gleason** and **Sally Sellers**. The **Cincinnati Jr. League** comes out every month to work in the studio; making a handpuppet stage and puppets. **Mrs. David Gamble** is chairman . . . **The Tatterman Marionettes**

played this season in Manitoba and Louisiana and New Hampshire and Texas and Iowa—and once they even went all the way to Miami University, which is just across the road from their own house!

Back to prophecy: rumor is that **Martin & Olga Stevens** are at last glancing toward a TV spot with a less-than-jaundiced eye . . . **George Latshaw's** new handpuppet show will be as dreamy as his new and sparkling stationary . . . **Burr Tillstrom's** Madam Oglepuss will NOT marry Colonel Crackey . . . Past President **Edward Johnson** will not attend the coming festival, because of one word spoken by **Frances Radford**. Frances is an Ann Arbor girl, graduate of Fine Arts at U of M, presently Art Teacher in Detroit Schools. The word—"Yes." The ceremony—probably early in July.

Come one, come all! Get your name in the papers, folks. Are you divorcing, marrying, dying, being born, being drafted, being jailed, or just being? Tell it to

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